

**Seasonal Eating**  
**Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent**

**Chicken Champions**  
**March 2015**

Winner, winner, chicken dinner! Last weekend, I, along with Gay Ervin and Louise Moore, had a great time participating in the Three C Competition to raise money for Our Town Shelbyville and The Fly Arts Center. We were The Three Gourmets and entered two of the Cs, a chicken dish and a chocolate dish. Chili was the third C but we passed on that one.

I'm not usually a competitive person. I don't like to get my hopes up and then be disappointed. So we went in just to support the cause and participate in the event – after all, cooking is right up our alley after 10 years of cooking classes, and we love to share with people. But as the event began and we had our table decorated and people started coming in and tasting, the competitive side came out –

maybe? – could we possibly? – they seem to like it? The competition was stiff – delicious teriyaki chicken, chicken salad, dumplings, wings, spicy chicken, sauced chicken, chicken dip – yum, yum, yum! So at 3:00 the fateful announcement of the winners began. We waited with bated breath and crossed fingers until there it was – 1st place goes to the Three Gourmets! Wow – they like us, they really like us!



For our winning chicken dish we made a Heavenly Chicken Lasagna. This is a great winter dish with layers of pasta, chicken, a spinach-cheese mixture, a mushroom-Alfredo sauce and Cheddar cheese. Hearty and filling and oh so tasty. Frozen spinach is a great value and is high in fiber, vitamin C, vitamin A and folate. When increasing your fruit and vegetable intake, frozen produce, which is harvested at peak and preserved, is a convenient choice. When making the lasagna, be sure to wring out all of the moisture you can from the thawed spinach. Mushrooms are also a good winter choice as they are available year round. Be sure to use fresh mushrooms instead of canned for better flavor and texture for your lasagna.

Gay boiled our chicken gently with some poultry seasoning, dried basil, bay leaf, salt and celery seed until it was pull apart tender and still juicy. While this recipe takes a little time to put together, it can be made a day ahead and then cooked the next and is well worth the effort.

This is just one of around 430 recipes in our School of Gourmet Arts Cookbook available at the UT Extension Office and People's Bank for \$20.00. So if you like this lasagna, be sure to pick one up for more delicious recipes like this one.

By the way, our Dark Chocolate Salted Caramel Tart won 2nd place. You can get the recipe on [www.kevinandamanda.com](http://www.kevinandamanda.com).

For more ideas on using seasonal produce, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>) and click on Seasonal Eating.

### **Heavenly Chicken Lasagna**

1 tablespoon butter  
1/2 onion, chopped  
4 ounces mushrooms, sliced  
1 (10 3/4-ounce) can cream of chicken soup  
1 (10-ounce) jar Alfredo sauce  
1 (4-ounce) jar pimiento, drained  
1/3 cup white wine  
1/2 teaspoon dried basil  
1 (10-ounce) box frozen leaf spinach, chopped and thawed  
1 cup cottage cheese  
1 cup ricotta cheese  
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
1 egg, lightly beaten  
9 lasagna noodles, cooked  
2 1/2 cups chicken breasts, cooked and chopped  
3 cups shredded Cheddar cheese, divided

Melt butter in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and mushrooms and sauté 5 minutes or until tender. Stir in soup, Alfredo sauce, pimiento, wine and basil. Reserve 1 cup sauce. Drain spinach well, pressing between layers of paper towels. Stir together spinach, cottage cheese, ricotta cheese, parmesan cheese and egg. Place 3 lasagna noodles in a lightly greased 9x13 inch pan with deep sides. Layer with half of sauce, half of spinach mixture, half of chicken and 1 cup of Cheddar cheese. Cover with 3 more noodles. Layer with remaining sauce, spinach mixture, chicken and 1 cup Cheddar cheese. Top with remaining three noodles and reserved 1 cup sauce. Cover and chill up to 1 day ahead. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining 1 cup Cheddar cheese and bake 5 minutes more or until cheese is melted. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.